

Civil news: mandatory telephone gateway phased out

Clients can now choose a greater number of providers to help with education, discrimination and debt issues under changes introduced on 15 May 2020.

This will allow people requiring help and support with education, discrimination and debt cases to contact face-to-face providers directly.

It means we need to make contractual and operational changes to the way we work to bring us in line with the new civil legal aid rules.

The new rules have been introduced through changes to the Civil Legal Aid Procedure Regulations. These regulations also make a number of other changes to civil legal aid procedures.

Mandatory telephone gateway removed

It is no longer mandatory for people to use the telephone gateway to access services in the education, discrimination and debt categories of law. This requirement has been removed from legislation.

We began the phased removal of the gateway in September 2019 when new face-to-face contracts were introduced for education and discrimination work. However, clients still had to apply for legal aid via the gateway.

These further changes mean clients in all three categories of law will now have a choice of accessing advice directly from a face-to-face provider or by the telephone gateway.

Changes to contracts and systems

A number of changes have been made to Legal Aid Agency systems, contracts, forms and guidance to reflect the removal of the gateway.

This includes changes to:

- Lord Chancellor's guidance
- CW1 application form
- Guidance on the CLA Service
- Housing Possession Court Duty Scheme guidance

The new CW1 application form is now available on GOV.UK. Previous versions of

this form will continue to be accepted in the coming weeks so that providers have time to adjust. But we would prefer you to use the new version where possible.

We will also be writing to all face-to-face housing and debt providers to increase the allocation of debt matter starts they hold. It is changing from 4 new matter starts to 10 new matter starts.

Mediation application form changes

This change means people making use of mediation services can now sign the application form remotely and send it back to the mediator.

This is instead of having to sign the form in the mediator's presence. The new rules mirror current provisions for legal help applications. Revisions have been made to the family mediation specification to reflect this change.

Mediators should be aware of the contingency guidance the LAA has in place as part of our response to the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic.

This guidance contains information on the approach we are currently taking to all applications for legal aid, including applications for mediation under the new rules. This includes, for example, guidance on the use of digital signatures and remote attendance during the pandemic.

The contingency guidance can be found here:

[Coronavirus \(COVID-19\): Legal Aid Agency contingency response](#)

Domestic violence evidence requirements

Changes have been made to the evidence requirements that need to be satisfied in order to qualify for legal aid as a victim of domestic abuse.

Revisions have been made to our guidance on evidence requirements as a result.

Backdating of means waiver for inquests

A discretion has been introduced allowing us to backdate legal help in inquest cases. This can be done in circumstances where we decide that the usual means thresholds should be waived.

We will be updating the exceptional case funding provider information pack for inquests to give you further information about this discretion.

Further information

[Legal aid guidance](#) – resources include [Lord Chancellor's guidance \(under section 4 of LASPO\)](#)

[Controlled work application forms](#)

[Standard Civil Contracts 2018](#)

[Standard Civil Contract \(Housing Possession Court Duty Scheme\) 2013](#)

[Housing Possession Court Duty Schemes](#)